
Appendix H

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern Relevance
and Importance Rationale

APPENDIX H

AREAS OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

RELEVANCE AND IMPORTANCE RATIONALE

NW CO Sage Grouse EIS
Audubon ACEC Proposal
Relevance and Importance Rationale
August 10, 2012

Participants:

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A. Relevance. An area meets the “relevance” criterion if it contains one or more of the following:

- 1. A significant historic, cultural, or scenic value (including but not limited to rare or sensitive archeological resources and religious or cultural resources important to Native Americans).**

No, the proposed ACEC does not meet this criterion.

- 2. A fish and wildlife resource (including but not limited to habitat for endangered, sensitive, or threatened species, or habitat essential for maintaining species diversity).**

Yes, the proposed ACEC meets this criterion. The GRSG is a candidate species under the ESA and is a BLM sensitive species, as well as a state

species of special concern in Colorado. The preliminary priority habitat has been delineated by the state wildlife agency, CPW.

- 3. A natural process or system (including but not limited to endangered, sensitive, or threatened plant species; rare, endemic, or relic plants or plant communities that are terrestrial, aquatic, or riparian; or rare geological features).**

No, the proposed ACEC does not meet this criterion. The ecosystem encompassed by the PPH (sagebrush ecosystem) is not unique in Colorado or in the western US.

- 4. Natural hazards (including but not limited to areas of avalanche, dangerous flooding, landslides, unstable soils, seismic activity, or dangerous cliffs). A hazard caused by human action may meet the relevance criteria if it is determined through the resource management planning process that it has become part of a natural process.**

No, the proposed ACEC does not meet this criterion.

- B. Importance.** The value, resource, system, process, or hazard described above must have substantial significance and values in order to satisfy the "importance" criteria. This generally means that the value, resource, system, process, or hazard is characterized by one or more of the following:

- 1. Has more than locally significant qualities that give it special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern, especially compared to any similar resource.**

Yes, the proposed ACEC meets this criterion. The PPH that is found in Colorado is not considered more than locally significant. When the Colorado PPH is compared to the entire acreage of PPH as a whole, the Colorado piece is a very small part. However, the PPH does have special worth and does give the BLM cause for concern. The Colorado portion of PPH has special worth in that it is the southeastern most edge of the range of GRSG. When land uses such as oil and gas development and rights-of-way are factored into the equation, the PPH becomes even more important for the protection of GRSG.

- 2. Has qualities or circumstances that make it fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable, exemplary, unique, endangered, threatened, or vulnerable to adverse change.**

Yes, the proposed ACEC meets this criterion. The sagebrush ecosystem found in the PPH is not considered a rare resource in Colorado, or throughout the western US. However, the PPH in Colorado is

1 considered a fragile ecosystem that has been identified by CPW as very
2 important for GRS. It contains habitat that is valuable for all life stages,
3 including lekking, brood-rearing, and winter range. GRS and their
4 habitats are vulnerable to adverse change.

5 **3. Has been recognized as warranting protection in order to**
6 **satisfy national priority concerns or to carry out the mandates**
7 **of FLPMA.**

8 Yes, the lands in the proposed ACEC meet this criterion. The GRS
9 land use planning process has been identified as a national priority
10 concern. The BLM Washington Office issued two instructional
11 memorandums, Instruction Memorandum 2012-043 and Instruction
12 Memorandum 2012-044, to help guide the BLM through its land use
13 planning processes across each state, and to identify these processes as
14 a national priority.

15 **4. Has qualities which warrant highlighting in order to satisfy**
16 **public or management concerns about safety and public**
17 **welfare.**

18 No, the proposed ACEC does not meet this criterion.

19 **5. Poses a significant threat to human life and safety or to**
20 **property.**

21 No, the proposed ACEC does not meet this criterion.
22

**NW CO Sage Grouse EIS
Preliminary General Habitat and Linkage Areas
Relevance and Importance Rationale
March 20, 2013**

Participants:

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Sylvia Ringer	Heidi Plank
Megan McGuire	Desa Ausmus
Lisa Belmonte	Robert Skorkowsky

A. Relevance. An area meets the “relevance” criterion if it contains one or more of the following:

- 1. A significant historic, cultural, or scenic value (including but not limited to rare or sensitive archeological resources and religious or cultural resources important to Native Americans).**

This criterion is not applicable to this proposal.

- 2. A fish and wildlife resource (including but not limited to habitat for endangered, sensitive, or threatened species, or habitat essential for maintaining species diversity).**

Yes, PGH and linkage areas do contain habitat for GRSG, which is a candidate species for listing under the ESA.

- 3. A natural process or system (including but not limited to endangered, sensitive, or threatened plant species; rare, endemic, or relic plants or plant communities that are terrestrial, aquatic, or riparian; or rare geological features).**

No, the PGH and linkage areas do not meet this criterion. The ecosystem encompassed by the PGH and linkage areas (sagebrush ecosystem) is not unique in Colorado or in the western US.

- 4. Natural hazards (including but not limited to areas of avalanche, dangerous flooding, landslides, unstable soils, seismic activity, or dangerous cliffs). A hazard caused by human action may meet the relevance criteria if it is determined through the resource management planning process that it has become part of a natural process.**

This criterion is not applicable to this proposal.

1 **B. Importance.** The value, resource, system, process, or hazard described
2 above must have substantial significance and values in order to satisfy the
3 "importance" criteria. This generally means that the value, resource, system,
4 process, or hazard is characterized by one or more of the following:

5 **1. Has more than locally significant qualities that give it special**
6 **worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for**
7 **concern, especially compared to any similar resource.**

8 The PGH and linkage areas do not have special worth, consequence,
9 meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern, compared to any similar
10 resource. They do not contain essential habitat, and according to the
11 CPW website¹ description of the linkage habitat, "These linkages should
12 be considered only as **potential areas** for movements between
13 populations." Overall, the PGH and linkage areas that are found in
14 Colorado are not considered more than locally significant. When the
15 Colorado PGH and linkage areas are compared to GRSG habitat as a
16 whole, the Colorado piece is a very small part and does not have more
17 than locally significant qualities.

18 **2. Has a quality or circumstances that make it fragile, sensitive,**
19 **rare, irreplaceable, exemplary, unique, endangered,**
20 **threatened, or vulnerable to adverse change.**

21 The linkage areas and PGH are not unique, fragile, sensitive, rare,
22 irreplaceable, exemplary, endangered, threatened, or vulnerable to
23 adverse change. The linkage areas would provide habitat that would
24 facilitate genetic flow between populations, but there is no data to
25 suggest that these are the only areas that would facilitate genetic flow
26 between populations in Northwest Colorado. According to the CPW
27 website¹ description of the linkage habitat, "These linkages should be
28 considered only as **potential areas** for movements between
29 populations." Other areas that are not designated as linkage areas could
30 also facilitate genetic flow between populations. Habitat qualities in the
31 linkage areas and PGH have not been found support persistent use or
32 sustain life functions of GRSG to the degree that PPH has been.

33 **3. Has been recognized as warranting protection in order to**
34 **satisfy national priority concerns or to carry out the mandates**
35 **of FLPMA.**

36 The GRSG land use planning process has been identified as a national
37 priority concern. The BLM Washington Office issued two instructional
38 memorandums, Instruction Memorandum 2012-043 and Instruction

¹ http://wildlife.state.co.us/SiteCollectionDocuments/DOW/Maps/WildlifeSpecies/Birds/GrSG_PPH_PGH_20120309_Final.pdf

Memorandum 2012-044, to help guide the BLM through its land use planning processes across each state, and to identify these processes as a national priority. However, the lands in PGH and linkage areas contain habitats that have not been identified in the NTT report (NTT 2011) as essential for breeding and should be considered as areas with generally lower activity as well as potential areas for movement between populations. Therefore, the PGH and linkage areas do not meet this criterion.

4. Has qualities which warrant highlighting in order to satisfy public or management concerns about safety and public welfare.

This criterion is not applicable to this proposal.

5. Poses a significant threat to human life and safety or to property.

This criterion is not applicable to this proposal.